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the gull

Volume 63

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May 1981

Number 4²²⁵

Annual Picnic and Mono Lake Gala

The sixth annual May picnic dinner and general membership meeting on Thursday, May 14, sponsored by the Conservation Committee, will be held at Tilden Park's Nature Center and the surrounding picnic area. Featured will be nature walks, a report on the exciting year-long GGAS effort to help save Mono Lake and, to cap it all, David Gaines — Mr. Mono Lake himself — will give a slide show and talk on "Mono Lake and Its Birdlife: An Uncertain Future."

The fight to save Mono Lake has gained national attention and is now generally recognized as one of the two or three major conservation battles in the country. GGAS is honored to be part of this cause. David Gaines has spent many years on Mono's shores studying the lake and its birdlife. He will guide us on a slide-illustrated journey to this awesomely beautiful region and bring us up to date on the threats to the future of this irreplaceable scenic and wildlife resource. Learn how Mono's briny water, filled with tiny shrimp, nourish millions of grebes, phalaropes and shorebirds during their migratory journeys and how, for thousands of years, California Gulls have raised their young on its island sanctuaries. If the fight to stop diversion of Mono's streams is lost, Mono Lake will shrink to one-fifth of its natural volume and become a birdless chemical broth.

Bring your family, friends and a picnic dinner to the redwood tables

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and grills on the spacious lawn near Tilden Park's Nature Center. Botanical and birding walks with interpretive leaders (including David Gaines) are planned for 6:30 p.m., ending in time for the 7:30 program in the Nature Center.

To get to the Tilden Park Nature Center from north Berkeley, drive up Spruce St. until you reach the intersection of Grizzly Peak Blvd. and Spruce St. Cross Grizzly Peak Blvd. and immediately turn left downhill on Cañon Dr. At the bottom of the hill turn left again to reach the Nature Center.

—CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Field Trips Calendar

See the April *Gull* for details on the following trip:

Saturday & Sunday, May 2-3 — Pinnacles National Monument.

Saturday, May 9—Mines Rd., Livermore. Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot of the Lucky store at S. Livermore and Pacific in Livermore. From there we will drive on mountain roads to Patterson. Bring food and liquids or buy lunch at the Branding Iron around noon. In past years we have seen Northern Oriole, Lewis' Woodpecker, Phainopepla, Roadrunner and wild turkeys. Be prepared for warm weather. Leader: Art Edwards (447-3720).

Sunday, May 10—Putah Creek. Meet at 9 a.m. at the top of Monticello Dam at the east end of Lake Berryessa. From Napa, go north on Hwy. 121 to Hwy. 128 and east to the dam or take the Pleasant Valley Rd. from I-80 (about four miles east of Fairfield) north to Hwy. 128 and west to the dam. Bring lunch and liquids. We will bird the dam and along Putah Creek. Canyon and Rock Wrens, Phainopeplas, Northern Orioles and a wide variety of other resident species may be expected. Leader: Bob O'Brien (526-8241). (✓)

Wednesday, May 13—Mini trip to Tilden Park Nature area. All our summer visitors will have arrived by now and started nesting. We should see Wilson's, Yellow and Orange-crowned Warblers, Northern Orioles, Black-headed Grosbeaks, etc. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the parking lot near the Tilden Environmental Education Center. Leaders: Delpha deTimofeev and Ruth Voss (525-8032).

Saturday, May 16—Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve. We will walk through this unique area during the morning in search of birds common to the arid interior valleys of the eastern Bay Area. Due to the midday heat we will stop birding around noon so lunch is optional. Go north on Hwy. 24 to Hwy. 4 and go east to the Somersville Rd. exit (Antioch). Follow Somersville south to the park entrance where we will

meet at **8 a.m.** For those who decide to stay in the afternoon we suggest exploring the archeological digs of the abandoned mining town. Mines in this area can be dangerous so don't explore abandoned sites. Bring liquids and boots. Water is limited and the terrain is rough. Leader: Dave Cornman (825-2106). (✓)

Sunday, May 17—Wildcat Canyon Regional Park. Meet at **8 a.m.** at Arlington Park at Arlington Ave. and Brewster Dr. in El Cerrito (AC Transit #7). From there we will drive to the starting point. Pack lunch and liquids for a six-mile hike. Boots are advisable. We will encounter some hills as we walk a transect of the canyon to bird in brushlands, oak woodlands, riparian streamsides and grasslands. We anticipate seeing a good representation of nesting and migrating birds of the East Bay. Leader: Malcolm Sproul (841-3086).

Saturday, May 23—Mt. Diablo State Park. Meet at **9 a.m.** at the Rock City parking area. From Oakland go east on I-580, then north on I-680 to Danville and follow the signs east on Diablo Rd. to the park. The first available parking is at Rock City, about one mile inside the south entrance station gate. Bring lunch and liquids. Be prepared to walk about a mile to the most productive birding area of the South Gate Rd. Leader: Mary Louise Rosegay (386-1640). (✓)

SUMMER CAMPING TRIPS

Details for these trips will be in the June *Gull* or refer to the June and July/August 1980 *Gulls*.

Saturday & Sunday, June 6-7—Mono Lake and vicinity. Leader: Tony Briggs (282-3142). The date for this trip is tentative and may be rescheduled for June 20-21.

Saturday & Sunday, June 13-14—Yuba Pass. Leader: Peter Allen (981-7199).

Friday, Saturday & Sunday, June 26-28. Lassen Volcanic National Park. Leader: Dan Murphy (564-0074).

Monday-Sunday, July 13-19, Yosemite High Sierra, East Sierra and Mono Lake. Leader: Marie Mans *et al.* (284-7681).

Saturday & Sunday, August 15-16. Mt. Pinos for California Condors. Eben McMillian (805-238-0675).

Carpooling arrangements can be made for trips marked (✓). Call Kate Partridge at 642-1733 (work hours) or 236-9853 (home) and leave a message. She will contact you.

Problems: If for any reason you have difficulty getting in touch with a field trip leader or need information regarding a trip, call Dan Murphy (564-0074) or the GGAS office (843-2222).

—FIELD TRIPS COMMITTEE

March Observations — through March 31

As always, March had lingering winter rarities but few others.

NONPASSERINES

Another Laysan Albatross turned up in the East Bay. The usual suspicion that these birds are brought by sailors was strong in this case because this albatross was found freshly dead (still warm) on a street in Alameda only blocks from the Naval Air Station. However, subtler facts suggest that the bird was wild. When picked up at night on March 17 there were frayed or broken feathers (BD), an unlikely condition for a captive albatross, of all birds! Several years ago a live Laysan Albatross appeared on the Naval Air Station at night (*fide* JM). Perhaps disoriented albatrosses occasionally visit us nocturnally. Not an enigma was another Laysan Albatross at Cordell Banks March 23 (BDP, JP). Less spectacular but rarer in March was the Flesh-footed Shearwater also found that day (BDP, JP). Another Flesh-footed Shearwater skirted Pt. Piños, Pacific Grove, with the returning masses of Sooty Shearwaters, March 27 (DR).

A Cattle Egret marching around the feeding area at Lake Merritt on the 16th (DK) was the only one reported except for another there the 26th (RB). The Least Bittern that excited many birders at Lake Merced March 7-22 (DL, mob) probably was present but undetected earlier in the winter. A Eurasian Green-winged Teal was spotted among the hordes of American conspecifics at Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge March 15 (AE). Four Blue-winged Teals at Fish Docks March 14 (JZ) were rather out of habitat. Berkeley's Tufted Duck remained at least to Feb. 25 (JR). Eurasian Wigeons and Oldsquaws were reported as expected, but up to five Oldsquaws attracted to a herring run on the east side of Tiburon deserve mention (LC, BL).

At Clifton Court, 19 Mountain Plovers stayed to Feb. 28 (JR) and seven to March 3 (HG). The six Spaletta Ranch American Golden Plovers were still present March 29 (MG). Single Rock Sandpipers remained at Pebble Beach, San Mateo County, and on Bodega Head March 21 (JM, *et al.*) and March 24 (JR, *fide* AG), respectively. A Ruff at San Luis National Wildlife Refuge March 30 (JB) was one of very few truly inland records and was approaching the latest California records. Interestingly, a Ruff was noted on the nearby Los Banos refuge March 23-29, 1975. Both the **Black-headed Gull** and the **Little Gull** were resighted at Stockton Sewage Ponds March 24 (JS). Caspian Terns returned early: one at Lake Merced Feb. 28, two there March 3, one at Fort Funston March 1 (all DM) and one at Sausalito March 8 (SFB).

PASSERINES

The Monterey Eastern Phoebe was last reported March 7 (EM, AM). The Salinas Sage Thrasher remained at least to mid-March (DR). The male Black-and-white Warbler in Tilden Park could be found through Feb. 28 (JR). In Pacific Grove the **Lucy's Warbler** was refound March 23 at Short and Locust streets in the company of two Nashville Warblers that presumably also wintered (DR). A Nashville Warbler at Audubon Canyon Ranch March 28 (GM, RP) appeared to be an early migrant. First individuals of both our orioles appeared on schedule: "Bullock's" Northern in Orinda March 17 (RS) and Hooded in Piedmont seven days later (DJ). The **Great-tailed Grackle** pair remained in the Fort Mason area through the month (EH, *et al.*). Two Swamp Sparrows lingered at least to March 6 at the Shields Salt Marsh (RJ, *et al.*).

Observers: Steve Abbors, Stephen F. Bailey, Judy Bryan, Rex Burress, Dorothy Calabrese, Leonard Compagno, Bill Dvorak, Art Edwards, Ronnie Fowler, Al Ghorso, Mary Gilman, Helen Green, Michael Green (MG), Ed Hase, Richard Jeffers, Danne Jones, Dick Kaufmann, Ken Lathrop, Bill Lenarz, Donna Lion, Akiko Makishima, Eugene Makishima, Gloria Markowitz, Robin May, many observers (mob), Joe Morlan, Dan Murphy, Benjamin D. Parmeter, John Parmeter, Robin Pulich, Jean Richmond, Dan Roberson, Rich Sinchak, James Stratton, Russell Young, Jon Zablackis.

—STEPHEN F. BAILEY, *Observations Editor*
Museum of Vertebrate Zoology

University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720

(phone 548-9507; or Karen L. Bailey at 642-3327 8 a.m.-noon, 1-5 p.m.)

Conservation Committee Notes

By GGAS Board of Directors' mandate, the Conservation Committee is devoting its major effort during 1981 to a fund-raising campaign to assist in the defense of Mono Lake. Announcements are appearing in the *Gull* each month.

The Condor Subcommittee has re-evaluated the California Condor policy of GGAS in relation to developments subsequent to the adoption of the policy on April 28, 1980. The discussion in subcommittee was as intense as that of the Board when the policy was originally adopted and the subcommittee was unable to give an unanimous recommendation to the Conservation Committee. The Conservation Committee voted to recommend to the Board at their March 30 meeting an amendment to the policy—that GGAS urge an environmental impact statement be

prepared on the proposed condor recovery program and that GGAS oppose the handling of the condors for any purpose at least until a final impact statement has been approved. The Board had to delay action because of lack of a quorum on March 30.

Other subcommittee activities:

Legislative—followed the challenges by Secretary of Interior Watt to the California off-shore marine sanctuaries. It has been frustrating.

Regional—followed up on the Navy diesel spill off Alameda that affected Crown Beach.

South Bay—studied the proposed Los Vaccros Dam Project and its deleterious effect on the San Joaquin Kit Fox, Golden Eagles and rare plants.

San Francisco—pursued Lake Merced construction activities and best way to influence Master Plan.

Least Tern Study—succeeded in getting a protective fence erected by the Navy and action by the California Department of Fish and Game to address the American Kestrel predation problem.

The GGAS Conservation Committee meets the third Thursday of each month. If you would like to participate, you are welcome. Call the GGAS office to express your interest.

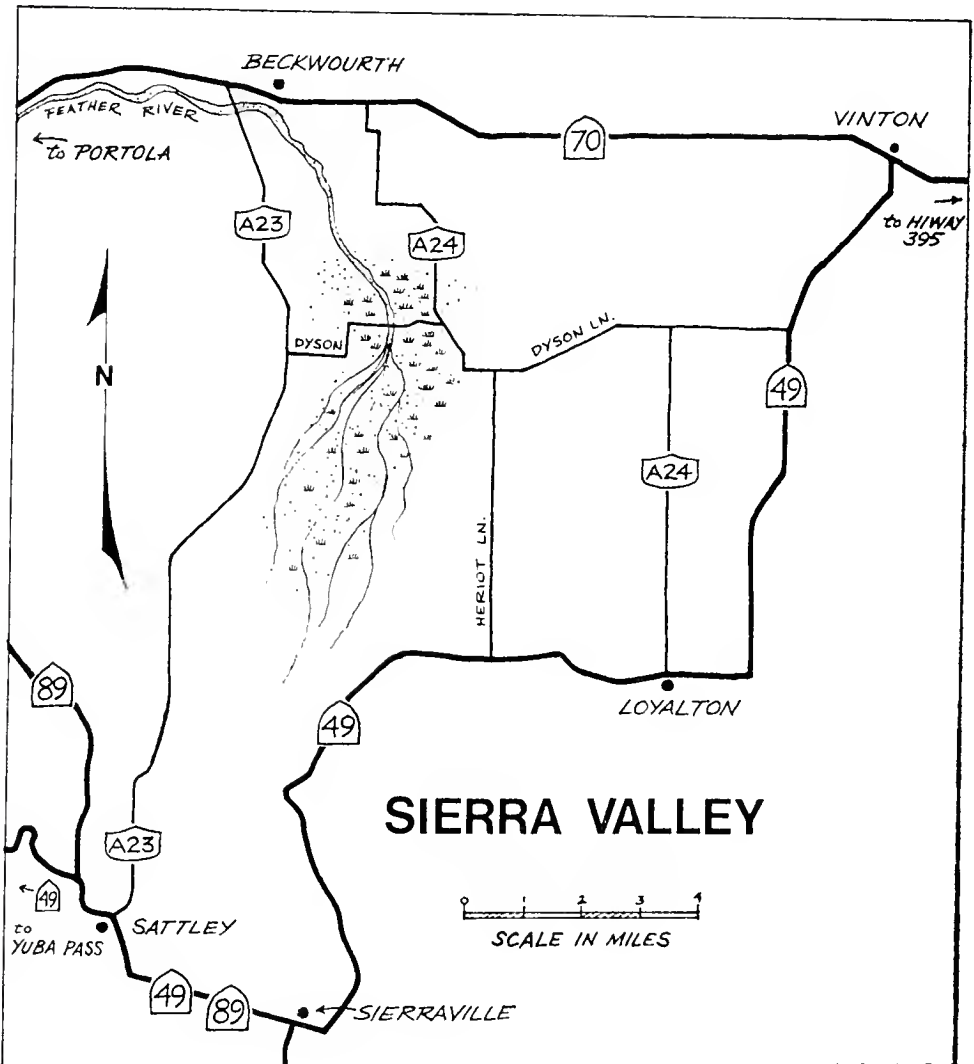
—CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Spring Birding in the Sierra Valley

When the winter snow is slow to melt on the higher slopes and passes of the northern Sierra a very good alternative for spring birding is offered by the Sierra Valley. Spring comes earlier here and the lush green meadows dotted with blue camas are alive with birds who have spent the winter further south or at lower altitudes. This large valley stretches for miles to the west and south of Beckwourth Pass (elevation 5,212 feet) and is only a few hundred feet lower in elevation. Its many converging small streams constitute the headwaters of the Feather River. Hwy. 70, the Feather River route, crosses the northern end of the valley

running east and west. The Northern Pacific railroad tracks, over which the original California Zephyr ran for many years, parallels the highway.

South of these two historic lanes of traffic and little noticed by the many people who travel at high speed through this beautiful country lies a network of roads, paved and unpaved, which traverse about 15 miles of river bottom, wet meadows, cattail and bulrush marsh land and native grass meadows. This irregularly shaped center is surrounded on all sides, except at the southern extremity where Cold Creek enters the valley through grassy fields and aspen groves, by dry lands which supports a healthy growth of sage, antelope and rabbit brush, occasional planting of very old Lombardy poplars and cottonwood trees and medium



sized ponderosa pines. It can immediately be seen that the variety of habitats found here afford the birder a great diversity of species, from the water-loving Pied-billed Grebe through the bulrush nesting Yellow-headed Blackbird to the Horned Lark and that elusive dweller of the sage, the Brewer's Sparrow.

Approaching the valley from Truckee on Hwy. 89 or by way of Yuba Pass and Hwy. 49, a good place to begin some serious birding is at Sattley which is located at the point where County Rd. A23 starts north from Hwys. 49 and 89 which, at this point, coincide. For the best results stay at a motel or camp near Sierra City on Hwy. 49 and drive over the pass and down the east side into the valley as early as possible. The valley warms up later and birds seem to vanish. Look for night hawks in the vicinity of Sattley and for Northern Orioles in the poplars back of the store-post office building. From here move north along A23 watching for wet areas and their attendant bird population.

After passing an intersection on the left there is a large area of almost unbroken sagebrush, also on the left. Stop and walk out into the sage. Birds here are shy and hard to see but there are certain to be Vesper, Savannah and Brewer's Sparrows. Don't be in a hurry if interested in these dry country species because Sage Thrashers have often been seen here and, once only, an off-course Lark Bunting. This is also a good place for a Black-billed Magpie.

Continue north on A23 to a point where there is an old wooden corral and cattle loading shaft on the left side of the road. A little beyond the point where these are first seen there is a piece of the old road turning off to the left which leads into these pens. This is a good place for nesting Mountain Bluebirds or Lewis' Woodpeckers, both of whom use the holes in the old fence posts. Since Sierra and Plumas counties have replaced the wooden fences with steel posts and barbed wire, niches such as found here are rare and well worth investigation.

Proceed north on A23 for about three or four miles beyond the wooden corrals, watching carefully for a side road on the right. This road, Dyson Lane, which turns off at a right angle to A23, is made of dirt and gravel and is well traveled. A few hundred feet in there are hot springs steaming on both sides of the road. These are Marble's Hot Springs and were the location of the Marble Ranch where Alice Marble of tennis fame spent some of her youth. The house and barns have long since been torn down and the springs belong to the county. Singing Willets are often found here. Beyond the springs the road crosses two slow moving streams which are bordered by bulrushes and cattails. Next, the road makes a right



Save Mono Lake

Catalog Sale

This is the third and last catalog sale for the benefit of Mono Lake. Golden Gate Audubon Society again is offering donated quality items at substantial discount under the usual price. These items may be viewed, unless otherwise indicated, in the GGAS office, 2718 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley, during the regular business hours of 9-12 a.m. and 1-4 p.m., Monday through Friday. To reserve an item, call the office, 843-2222, during regular business hours, or 524-1506 evenings and weekends. Reservations will be held only 5 days without payment. Calls accepted for this May list of items beginning Wednesday, May 13. Some items may still be available from the March and April catalogs; call the GGAS office to find out. This is the final catalog sale--a full listing of good things, all for the benefit of Mono Lake.

- | | Price* |
|--|---------|
| 1. Don Roberson's <u>Rare Birds of the West Coast</u> ,
Woodcock Publications 1980, cloth bound,
illustrated. Autographed and donated by
the author, a former Observations editor
for the <u>Gull</u> . Retail \$25. | \$20.00 |
| 2. David Gaines' <u>Birds of the Yosemite Sierra</u> ,
a distributional survey, California
Syllabus 1977, paper bound, illustrated.
Inscribed and donated by the author, "Mr.
Mono Lake." Retail \$6. | 5.00 |
| 3. John K. Terres' <u>Audubon Society Encyclopedia
of North American Birds</u> , Alfred A. Knopf
1980, cloth bound, illustrated. Retail \$60. | 35.00 |
| 4. Mono Lake scape, looking towards eastern
Sierra, 11" x 14" print on 16" x 20" museum
board, silver gelatin print processed to
archival standards. [?] Furnished by landscape
photographer Michael Beaucage of Berkeley.
Gallery price \$150. | 75.00 |
| 5. Watercolor by Jason Schoener, Main coast
with Great Black-backed Gulls, 7½" x 10",
matted ready for framing, a gem. Schoener's
paintings are in many collections including
the Cleveland Museum, Whitney Museum, and
California Palace of the Legion of Honor.
He is Professor of Fine Arts and Dean of
Advanced Studies at the College of Arts and
Crafts in Oakland. Donated by the artist.
Gallery price \$150. | 50.00 |
| 6. Black walnut bowl, layered and turned 5½"
x 10½", decorated with a mythical bird, by
Gort Davis. His work is in the Oakland
Museum, and Los Robles, Fine Woodworking,
and Zosaku Galleries. Donated by the
artist. Gallery price \$95. | 75.00 |
| 7. Tent, Aireflex, 2 men, arch bow, really
compact. Donated by Sierra Designs,
Berkeley. Retail \$280. | 238.00 |

- | | Price* |
|---|----------|
| 8. Water color by Ariel, "Venus Drawn by Doves," framed by Bosko, 20" x 25". Ariel has exhibited widely in the Bay Area and also in New York and England, and is represented by Vorpal Gallery in San Francisco. She is well known as a theater designer and received the coveted Bay Area Theater Critics Circle Award for Design in 1979 and for Costume Design in 1980. Donated by the artist. The painting may be viewed at Bosko Gallery, 6038 College Avenue, Oakland. Gallery price \$650. | \$500.00 |
| 9. Monterey Bay pelagic excursion for one, June 13; sea birds and marine mammals are yours for the day. Donated by Debi Love Millichap; \$21 value. | 18.00 |
| 10. Intarsia box of Albert Rosenblatt, black limba and poplar, 2-3/4" x 6-1/2" x 7-1/2", intarsia design is a graceful tree. Donated by the Berkeley artist whose hardwood boxes are in the Nature Company and Gumps. Gallery price \$50. | 40.00 |
| 11. Jack Wilburn's <u>Wild Animals of California and the West</u> , Cougar Books 1979. Paper bound, illustrated by Tom Zanze, a Sacramento Bee artist. Wilburn is a naturalist and photographer. Chapter examples: Mountain Lion, Saw-whet Owl. Autographed and donated by Zanze. (See also Item #12.) Retail \$8. | 7.00 |
| 12. Tom Zanze's bird prints, sepia on buff, 8 1/2" x 12"; e.g., California Condor, Curve-billed Thrasher, Cinnamon Teal--choice of <u>20</u> ; donated by the artist. | 5.00 ea. |
| 13. Chris Jones' <u>Climbing in North America</u> , University of California Press 1976, paper bound, illustrated. A definitive history of climbing that reads like a story, by a literate and experienced climber. Autographed and donated by the author. Retail \$10. | 8.50 |

- | | Price* |
|---|----------|
| 14. Porcelain bowl, 2½" x 7½", by Catherine Hiersoux, whose studio is on Colusa Avenue in Berkeley. Her work has been exhibited in the White House, Smithsonian, and Oakland Museum. She is a master of her art, finding inspiration in classical forms. Donated by the artist. Gallery price \$25. | \$ 22.00 |
| 15. Sigurd F. Olson's <u>Runes of the North</u> , Alfred A. Knopf 1979, cloth bound, autographed. The November 1980 <u>Audubon</u> had a feature article on this well-known ecologist and interpretive naturalist. Donated by the Nature Company of Berkeley. Retail \$9. | 8.00 |
| 16. William Heath Davis' <u>Seventy-five Years in California</u> , edited by Harold A. Small, 1967. Cloth bound, illustrated, a deluxe edition. Recollections and remarks by one who knew California from his first visit in 1831 until his death in 1909. Donated by the publisher, John Howell Books of San Francisco. Retail \$27.50. | 23.00 |
| 17. Carole Terwilliger Meyers, whose articles have appeared in <u>California Living</u> and <u>New West</u> . Her paper bound books have been donated by Carousel Press of Albany. | |
| (A) <u>Weekend Adventures for City-Wearry Families</u> , a guide to overnight trips in northern California, 1980. Retail \$6. | 5.00 |
| (B) <u>Eating Out with the Kids in San Francisco and the Bay Area</u> , a guide, 1980. Retail \$5. | 4.00 |
| (C) <u>Getting in the Spirit, Annual Bay Area Christmas Events</u> , 1979. Retail \$2.50. | |
| 18. Water color study by Nancy Conzett, for a painting that sold for \$300 in the mid-70's. "Last Legs" is a "portrait" of an ancient wicker chair on the porch of a Mendocino County cabin, framed 20" x 17". Conzett, a graduate of the California College of Arts and Crafts, has had paintings in group and one-person shows throughout the Bay Area. Donated by the artist. The painting may be viewed at Contemporary Arts, 2318 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley. | 100.00 |

angle turn to the left and further on one to the right, continuing east over an old iron bridge across the nascent Feather River. Cliff Swallows by the dozens nest under this bridge. The road then winds past a large pond where downy red-headed young coots are usually in evidence as well as uncommon families of duck which quickly swim for the security of the reeds on the far sides of the pond.

This connecting road (Dyson Lane) between A23 and A24 is the heart of the valley as far as bird watching is concerned. A spotting scope is necessary for the best results. However, many interesting species can be observed from the road with binoculars only — American Bittern, Virginia Rail, Common Snipe, Willet, Wilson's Phalarope, Black Tern, Barn, Cliff and Rough-winged Swallows, Long-billed Marsh Wren, Yellow-headed Blackbird and others depending upon the diligence of the observer. Where the road turns sharply to the right, set up your scope and examine the wet areas to the north for American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt and ducks such as Mallard, Gadwall, Pintail, Cinnamon Teal, Redhead, Ruddy, etc. Also, in the distance and more particularly to the south of the road at about this point, a few Sandhill Cranes are regularly seen as well as Canada Geese. While at a standstill here and with no motors running, this will be a good place to listen for the flight display of the Common Snipe. This is a sound made high in the air by the wing and tail feathers as the bird descends. It is known as winnowing and once heard is not soon forgotten. It is easily recognized after a few moments concentration and, perhaps, by the sighting of the sometimes fluttering, but more often, downward moving bird.

Where the dirt road meets A24 there are a group of ranch buildings. This is the site of one of the earliest pioneer ranches in the valley, the Scolari Ranch, until recently operated by members of the family who have always been sympathetic toward people interested in seeing the bird life the valley has to offer. Pass by the ranch and turn right onto A24 and continue along this paved road (a road variously called Harriet Lane or Heriot Lane will intersect on the right: do not take it) until it turns right toward the town of Loyalton. Do not go into Loyalton but continue straight ahead (east) toward Hwy. 49. Watch for Burrowing Owls (perhaps on the fence posts) and wherever there is sagebrush look for Sage Thrashers who seem to have moved from the western to the eastern side of the valley. Because many factors in the valley vary from year to year, it is well to be on the alert for whatever appears. (Serendipity is the word!)

One day is hardly enough time in which to see all of the species of

birds mentioned. Do not be discouraged. The writer has birded in this area for 25 years and in that time there have been many changes in the valley. Originally the ranchers pastured their cattle on the extensive natural grass meadows. However, deep wells have been sunk in recent years and irrigated fields are becoming common. Also there has been extensive destruction of the sagebrush by means of aerial spraying. Both of these modern practices have cut down enormously on the suitable bird habitat which existed in the valley even long after it was settled by the pioneers. The population of hawks has been sadly affected. Marsh Hawks are still present but far fewer American Kestrels are to be seen. In the sixties, Swainson's Hawks were regularly sighted but now are very rare. Red-tailed Hawks are found but not as frequently as formerly. Soaring Golden Eagles appear occasionally out of the blue. Pumping has completely dried up parts of the valley and in years of low snowfall on the surrounding mountains the central part of the valley with its many small streams and the river itself do not contain as much moisture as in the past. It is a sadly changing area but the birds are still there though in ever-diminishing numbers.

Having reached the junction of the country road with Hwy. 49 there are three choices for further birding, two in the Sierra Valley itself and the other a somewhat longer trip over Beckwourth Pass to an area where Pinyon Jays are in the habit of nesting.

One choice is to turn right onto Hwy. 49 and travel southeast toward Loyalton and Sierraville and thence onto Hwy. 89 and back to Truckee. Outside of Loyalton to the southeast there is Smithneck Creek and its riparian growth of cottonwoods and aspen trees. Pass through the small subdivision and drive along the dirt road which parallels it as far as one finds it profitable. A better side road turns off to the left just before reaching Sierraville. This road passes a small airport and Campbell's Hot Springs and continues on into the low hills. A severe forest fire, originating near Boreal Ridge, burned through here about 20 years ago and it is interesting as a recovering area. The birds vary from year to year.

A second choice would be to travel north to the valley of Vinton and Hwy. 70. Turn left on this thoroughfare. Note the irrigated fields on the left side of the road. A24 deadends at Hwy. 70 a few miles short of Beckwourth. Turn left onto it and proceed back to the Scolari Ranch and return through the marsh for a second look.

A third choice is to go in search of the Pinyon Jays, leaving the valley behind and traveling into the pinyon-juniper habitat of northeastern

California. If you choose this extension of your trip, drive north on Hwy. 49 until it terminates at the intersection with Hwy. 70 again at Vinton. Turn right onto Hwy. 70 and proceed two miles east to the village of Chilcoat. If you have failed so far to find Northern Orioles they are sure to be here nesting in the cottonwoods beside the combination store-Chevron filling station. (Check your gas gage.) Continue east on Hwy. 70 for six miles over Beckwourth Pass and on to Hallelujah Junction where the road deadends at Hwy. 395. Turn north on Hwy. 395 and continue for ten miles to Red Rock Rd. which comes in from the right and is easily identified by the rock formations which gives it its name. Drive slowly along this dirt road. It is bordered by sage and goodsized pinyon pines. Alongside there is a small creek. Listen for the small flock of Pinyon Jays which frequent this somewhat limited niche. They are easily located by their nasal, mewling call which is usually given in flight. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers nest here also, but it takes a sharp eye to locate them. After about three miles the pines stop and one comes into open sagebrush country where there is a good chance of seeing a Golden Eagle or Burrowing Owl. This is Poor-will country but they are rarely seen except in the early morning or at dusk.

We must not leave you stranded in northeastern California where, for birders, the temptations are many and the distances great. If a quick return to the Bay Area is necessary, travel south on Hwy. 395 to Reno and from there west on I-80.

—BETH C. SNYDER

Gull Late? Tell the P.O.

Many complaints were heard from readers who received their March *Gull* unreasonably late. A thorough check shows that the problem is with the postal service. *Gull* copy is delivered to the printer on or before the tenth of the month and then requires about ten working days to produce. It then goes to a mailing service which takes a maximum of three days to process it for the post office. Given this schedule, *The Gull* is usually at the post office by the 27th or 28th of the month. A lag in delivery of ten days or more, which has been the case, is outrageous.

There is a standard complaint form available at most post offices and we also have some on hand at the GGAS office. Fill one out each time your *Gull* is late arriving; one carbon copy goes to Washington, D.C., the other to the local postmaster. Perhaps if enough cries of indignation are heard you'll begin receiving the publication on time.

—Editor

GGAS First Annual Potluck Meeting

The Annual Meeting will be in the form of a potluck dinner this year; the emphasis will be on informality, good music, good food and good friendship. Mark your calendar for Friday, June 19, at the Leona Lodge, 4444 Mountain Blvd., Oakland. Doors will open at 6:30 p.m. with dinner to start at 7 p.m. If you have a dish that needs heating, plan to arrive at the earlier time.

Members whose last names begin with A-H should bring a dessert; I-Q, a main dish; R-Z, a salad. Please call the GGAS office, 843-2222, or Delpha DeTimofeev at 632-5176 if you plan to come.

Ray Skjelbred, a fine piano player who has recorded on the Arhoolie label with Dick Oxtot's Golden Age Jazz Band, will provide lively sounds to eat your dinner by. Fear not, speeches will be kept to a minimum, although incoming GGAS officers will be introduced so you can get to know them better during the evening.

To reach the City of Oakland-owned Leona Lodge from San Francisco, take Hwy. 580 to the 35th Ave. exit. Turn left on 35th (which becomes Redwood Rd.) and proceed to Mountain Blvd. Turn right on Mountain Blvd.

From east Oakland go via the Warren Frwy. (Hwy. 13) to the Carson St. turnoff and go right on Mountain Blvd. There is ample parking, some of it on the opposite side of Mountain Blvd. from the Lodge.

See you there!

Help for New Birders

A recent letter to the Editor suggested that it would be helpful to novice birders if those with more experience would occasionally be available to answer queries as to bird identification. The following people have volunteered and more are urged to do so:

San Francisco— Doug Gomke (885-1480)

Oakland (Montclair area)— Sylvia Sykora (339-2715)

North Berkeley— Clark Gleason (843-8846)

Wilma Ghiorso, *weekday afternoons, 1-6 p.m. only* (525-4677)

Kensington— Nancy Conzett (527-2593)

Backyard Birders' Question Box

Birds seem to do some odd things at times, but there is always a reason for their actions. As more ornithologists publish their findings on the behavior of birds, we lay people will become less likely to think that the "strange" behavior we observe is unusual.

A caller from the East Bay was concerned that some small birds were trying to get into the house through the closed windows. Shades of Alfred Hitchcock and "The Birds"!

At nesting time, some small birds search avidly for spider's silk to bind their nesting material together. Far from being interested in the inside of a human habitation, they examine the siding and any cracks in overhangs or window framing on the outside. Sometimes they work so closely to the building that their wings beat against a wall or a window. Later, just after the nestlings have hatched, some birds, even seed eaters, dig out spiders and small insects from these same areas to provide quick high-protein food for their young.

"Anting" is another type of avian behavior that may be puzzling to a first time observer. It is quite startling to see a robin, or some other bird, pick up something from the ground and rub it vigorously under the partially opened wings and under the tail. Meanwhile, the bird seems to be enjoying the sensation, and will sometimes fall over in efforts to get at hard-to-reach parts of the body.

This performance seems to occur particularly among passerines and has been well documented since Audubon observed it and recorded it in his notes. Only since the 1940's, however, have ornithologists begun to acknowledge that its occurrence is unquestionable.

Recent research has produced several theories as to why birds indulge in anting.

1. It is part of the care of the feathers, supplementing the oil from the glands.
2. Formic acid from the ants may kill mites and other parasites.
3. The formic acid may soothe skin irritation after seasonal molts.
4. Birds like the odor of formic acid or, conversely, may wish to get rid of it before eating the ant.

Nobody really knows. Maybe it just feels good, as does stimulating human skin with rubbing alcohol or after-shave lotion. At any rate, it is an interesting and not particularly rare occurrence that backyard birders may hope to observe.

If you would like to share information on bird behavior that you have observed, or if you have a question about the birds that are commonly found in our area, write to or call Kay Steinberg, 850-38th Ave., San Francisco, CA 94121 (751-4293).

—KAY STEINBERG

Nature Week at Oakland's Feather River Camp

An "Introduction to Sierra Nevada Natural History" at Oakland's Feather River Family Camp (3400-foot elevation) is offered July 6-13 with naturalist Paul F. Covel. Full board is very moderately priced. Evenings feature short, illustrated nature talks. Make reservations during the week at the Oakland Office of Parks and Recreation, 1520 Lakeside Dr., 273-3791.

May Cooper Society Meeting

Dr. Jeffrey R. Walters of the UC Museum of Vertebrate Zoology will speak on the clutch sizes in precocial birds at the May 18 meeting of the Cooper Ornithological Society to be held in Room 2503 of the Life Sciences Bldg. on the UC campus. A business meeting beginning at 7:30 p.m. precedes the 8 p.m. lecture. All are welcome.

Bottle Bill Benefit

Are you someone who hates throwaway beverage containers but never knew what to do about it? Your time has come; the California Bottle Bill Initiative needs your help and an easy way to support deposit legislation is to buy tickets for a benefit drawing to raise funds for the 1982 Bottle Bill Initiative. There is a large selection of prizes you might win. Call Tristan Comings of Californians Against Waste at 527-5643 to request tickets or more information.

NOTES FROM THE BOARD

For financial reasons, the GGAS Board of Directors has decided against producing a 1982 Birders' Calendar and Almanac.

The Board voted to give \$5000 to defray legal expenses in the law suit to save Mono Lake. This money will come from the general fund and is over and above the fund-raising efforts now being conducted by the Conservation Committee.

Another Birder Migrates in

Dan and Joan Murphy and siblings Michael and John welcomed the arrival of Matthew Daniel Murphy, born April 1, just in time to make *The Gull's* copy deadline.

GIFTS AND BEQUESTS

For GGAS

Gift of

Jon Hanshew
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In memory of
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Dorothy Allen

In memory of
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For Mono Lake

In memory of
Julie Stitt

Roxie and Clark Gleason

For GGAS' Urban Parks Fund

Joan and Dan Murphy

Memorial and honorary gifts and bequests will be used as specified by the donors. Acknowledgments will be made in *The Gull* and personally by the Corresponding Secretary, Minnie Groshong. Please send checks made out to the Golden Gate Audubon Society to: Corresponding Secretary, GGAS, 2718 Telegraph Avenue, #206, Berkeley, CA 94705. All gifts are tax deductible.



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THE GULL

MAY 1981

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Mail for all individuals listed above should be sent to the GGAS office.

Send address changes to office promptly; Post Office does not forward *THE GULL*. Monthly meetings: second Thursday, 7:30 p.m. Joint membership - local and national \$20 per year (individual); \$25 (family); includes *AUDUBON* Magazine and *THE GULL*; to join, make checks payable to National Audubon Society and send to GGAS office to avoid delay in receiving *THE GULL*. Membership renewals should be sent directly to the National Audubon office. Subscriptions to *THE GULL* separately \$5 per year; single issues 75¢. High school and college student membership \$13.50 per year. Senior citizen individual, \$13.50, senior citizen family, \$15.50.

The Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. was established January 25, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948.

***The Gull* deadline is the first of the month for the following month:**